

# Task Package

You are the team that has been specifically tasked with developing a long-term strategy for the Saskatchewan Library System (SLS) for presentation to a panel of Cabinet Ministers.

Your presentation needs to identify and analyse options and make a recommendation for this strategy.

## **The Case of the Languishing Libraries** **(Warning: the following is entirely a work of fiction)**

### **Scenario:**

The SLS was created in 1920 to “ensure availability of quality reading material and reference works to the people of Saskatchewan and to foster the goals of literacy in support of a well-informed populace”.

This year, the Ministry will provide \$250 million in funding to the SLS to support both operating and capital costs of 50 local library boards across the province. About 40% of this funding is to library boards in the major centres, which operate several branch libraries within their communities. The remaining 60% of funding is provided to smaller centres which operate single facilities within their respective communities.

The SLS is proud of having a collection of more than 10 million volumes in works of fiction, non-fiction, reference works and audio and visual materials. This represents, collectively, one of the largest collections of library materials (on a per capita basis) of any province in Canada.

Libraries operated within the school system (Kindergarten to Grade 12) and the college and university system are provided funding by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Advanced Education, respectively, and operate separately of the SLS system but co-operate on programs such as the inter-library loans program.

Three years ago the Ministry provided a substantial increase in funding to the SLS comprised of a \$10 million increase in base operating grants and a further increase of \$5 million (ongoing) to fund 50 additional librarian positions within the system. This \$5 million resulted in only 5 additional positions across the system (at a cost of \$500,000) with the remaining \$4.5 million being diverted into expanded collections and enhanced facilities such as public meeting rooms for local organizations.

Five years ago the government passed legislation requiring that every library must employ at least 10 percent of their staff (minimum 2 persons per library) who have at least one degree in library science. The Saskatchewan Technical Association of Librarians and Library Scientists (STALL) would like this to be increased to a ratio of 20% and a minimum of 4.

A review of Statistics Canada data shows that Saskatchewan has 1,000 people employed as professional librarians (100 per 100,000 of population), more than any other province and has more libraries than any other province on a population basis.

A study commissioned by your Ministry four years ago found that there had been a steady decline in traditional library lending activity for more than 20 years, hastened by

the availability of internet reference material and local book vendors. The only exceptions to this declining usage were in lending of audio and visual materials and in attendance in periodicals reading rooms.

Another study revealed that there is substantial duplication in the system with the 10 million volumes actually only representing 2 million different entries as it is very likely that the most popular volumes exist in all 50 libraries (and many times over in those with branch libraries). This study also noted that, with modern communication and transportation, the inter-library loan system could supply 98% of requested volumes within a day of request.

The library boards have been keen to expand the audio and video collections but have rejected expansions of reading room facilities because the clientele in these facilities, especially in the large centres, consists almost entirely of homeless individuals seeking indoor refuge during the day when the homeless centres are closed. The boards have argued that providing facilities for the homeless is not within their mandate.

### **The Wrinkles**

The Ministry of Advanced Education (MAE) has received representation from Saskatchewan College and Institute of Librarians and Library Sciences (SCILLS) that they will require a doubling of their current funding from \$100 million per year to \$200 million per year because the government's program of providing free tuition to students of library science (instituted 10 years ago to address a perceived shortage of librarians) now attracts 8 applicants for every one of the 50 positions within the school. The principal has requested a doubling of seats to meet this demand for spaces and produce 100 graduates per year.

The government has been approached by the Saskatchewan Technical Association of Librarians and Library Scientists (STALL) to the effect that they would like the Saskatchewan government to increase funding to local libraries, noting that, of the 50 graduates from the Saskatchewan College and Institute of Librarians and Library Sciences (SCILLS) in the past year, only 12 have found employment within Saskatchewan.

The Ministry of Advancement and Development (MAD) has received representation from the Saskatchewan Hospitality Association (SHA) complaining that their members are unable to compete with subsidized meeting space in the public libraries and are thus losing a significant amount of their business to the libraries. The Ministry has received similar correspondence from the Saskatchewan Association of Video Emporiums (SAVE) and the Saskatchewan Association of Music Stores (SAMS) that they are losing business to library lending which is especially difficult when their industries are already under stress.

They have also been advised by the Saskatchewan Association of Developers (SAD) that local libraries provide some of the highest paying jobs in many small communities. The spouse of the Minister of Libraries is a professional librarian.

The Ministry of Social Services has received a request from the Saskatchewan Association of Shelters for the Homeless (SASH) that they would like to see an increase in their funding by \$10 million per year which would allow them to operate and maintain day facilities for the homeless including counselling centres and lifestyle training programs aimed at stabilizing and re-integrating the homeless.

The Ministry of Finance has expressed concern about the overall cost of libraries (\$250 million plus \$100 million for SCILLS, not to mention school and college libraries), the rate of growth in library funding and, especially, the demands for additional increases in funding. In addition, Finance is under pressure to identify potential budget savings across government to meet a mounting fiscal shortfall.

### **The Issue**

The original mandate of the library system may need to be reconsidered in light of changing technology which allows greater access to reference material as well as other printed material such as periodicals and works of fiction and non-fiction. Illiteracy among the general population is not nearly as extensive as it may have been in 1920, nor is the remaining illiteracy effectively addressed through public libraries.

Much of the dwindling role of libraries can be met through improvements in the inter-library loans system and/or improved home internet access.

Through historical (and probably anachronistic) measures, the government is now pursuing policies aimed at artificially boosting both the demand for and the supply of librarians.

None of the conditions undermining the need for libraries in their traditional role are likely to change in the foreseeable future. In fact, they can only be expected to increase in intensity.

The pursuit of traditional methods, far past their useful life has resulted in resources being ineffectively employed (in library operations) to poorly meet a legitimate social need (day shelter for the homeless) when these needs could be much more effectively and efficiently met through another system (shelters) which is only unable to meet the need because of inadequate resources being diverted to the library system.

Ministries genuinely interested in meeting social needs (as opposed to protecting the interests of their interest groups) would see that the library system should be rationalized

in favour of increased use of interlibrary loans, reduced resources (staff and physical facilities) and savings from that process diverted into day facilities for the homeless.

<b>Comparison of Library Resources in Canada</b>					
	<b>2008 Population (in thousands)</b>	<b>Number of Professional Librarians</b>	<b>Librarians per 100,000 Population</b>	<b>Number of Public Libraries*</b>	<b>Libraries per 100,000 population</b>
<b>Province</b>					
NL	506	456	90	22	4.3
PEI	140	119	85	4	2.8
NS	937	749	80	34	3.6
NB	747	523	70	30	4.0
QE	7,754	5,040	65	333	4.3
ON	12,936	9,702	75	582	4.5
MB	1,206	965	80	60	5.0
<b>SK</b>	<b>1,014</b>	<b>1,014</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>6.1</b>
AL	3,596	2,517	70	173	4.8
BC	4,384	2,849	65	206	4.7
<b>CAN</b>	<b>33,327</b>	<b>23,934</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>1,506</b>	<b>4.5</b>

\* Includes Branch facilities.

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Tables 051-0001; 067-XXXX and 089-XXXX

<b>Library Usage in Saskatchewan</b>					
	<b>1950</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Lending Activity (average monthly)</b>					
- Books	1,000,000	900,000	850,000	500,000	250,000
- Audio Visual	500	1,000	2,000	3,000	4,000
<b>Total Lending</b>	<b>1,000,500</b>	<b>901,000</b>	<b>852,000</b>	<b>503,000</b>	<b>254,000</b>
<b>Attendance (average daily)</b>					
- Reference	3,000	2,500	2,200	1,200	800
- Reading Room	2,000	1,000	800	1,000	1,200
- Public Events	300	400	450	500	600
<b>Total Attendance</b>	<b>5,300</b>	<b>3,900</b>	<b>3,450</b>	<b>2,700</b>	<b>2,600</b>

Source: Saskatchewan Library System, *Annual Reports*.

<b>Ministry of Libraries History of Funding</b>						
(in thousands of dollars)						
	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>Budget 2009-10</b>	<b>Request 2010-11</b>
Central Management Services	\$2,750	\$2,800	\$2,850	\$2,900	\$3,000	\$3,300
Provincial Library	\$9,100	\$9,200	\$9,300	\$9,400	\$9,500	\$10,000
Saskatchewan Library System	\$225,000	\$230,000	\$230,000	\$245,000	\$250,000	\$260,000
<b>Ministry Expense</b>	<b>\$236,850</b>	<b>\$242,000</b>	<b>\$242,150</b>	<b>\$257,300</b>	<b>\$262,500</b>	<b>\$273,300</b>
<b>Classifications by Type</b>						
Salaries	\$1,375	\$1,400	\$1,425	\$1,450	\$1,500	\$1,650
Supplier and other Payments	\$1,375	\$1,400	\$1,425	\$1,450	\$1,500	\$1,650
Transfers for Public Services	\$234,100	\$239,200	\$239,300	\$254,400	\$259,500	\$270,000
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$236,850</b>	<b>\$242,000</b>	<b>\$242,150</b>	<b>\$257,300</b>	<b>\$262,500</b>	<b>\$273,300</b>

<b>Ministry of Advanced Education: Subvote - Support for Saskatchewan College and Institute of Librarians and Library Sciences</b>						
(in thousands of dollars)						
	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>Budget 2009-10</b>	<b>Request 2010-11</b>
Central Management Services	\$3,000	\$3,100	\$3,200	\$3,400	\$3,500	\$6,000
Payment to SCILLS	\$90,000	\$93,000	\$96,000	\$98,000	\$100,000	\$200,000
Tuition Rebate Program	\$900	\$900	\$950	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
<b>Subvote Total</b>	<b>\$93,900</b>	<b>\$97,000</b>	<b>\$100,150</b>	<b>\$102,400</b>	<b>\$104,500</b>	<b>\$208,000</b>